

Message Text

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EXDIS

FROM VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV
SUBJECT: SADAT'S AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

REF: ROME 2871

1. VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTER CASAROLI GAVE US THE FOLLOWING
ASSESSMENT OF EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT FEBRUARY 13
TO THE VATICAN, WHICH SUPPLEMENTS THE INITIAL ANALYSIS WE
PROVIDED IN ROME 2871.

A. HE CONFIRMS THAT VISIT TOOK PLACE IN CLIMATE OF
CORDIALITY AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

B. SADAT APPEARED ENCOURAGED BY HIS TRICONTINENTAL
TRIP, PARTICULARLY WITH THE RECEPTION HE RECEIVED
IN THE US AND HE SEEMED DETERMINED TO PURSUE THE
PEACE PROCESS.

C. POPE ENCOURAGED SADAT TO PERSEVERE IN HIS HISTORIC
PEACE MISSION AND PROMISED TO DO ALL HE CAN TO GET
OTHER PARTIES TO JOIN THE NEGOTIATIONS.

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D. REINFORCING THE POPE'S ENCOURAGEMENT WAS A
SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM DAYAN TO CASAROLI JUST PRIOR
TO SADAT'S VISIT TO THE EFFECT THAT (1) THE
ISRAELI GOVERNMENT (GOI) WAS COMMITTED TO THE
PURSUIT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE; (2) THAT
THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI

"NEED NOT CONSTITUTE AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE"; AND
(3) A HINT THAT GOI WAS PREPARED TO "EXCHANGE
TERRITORY IN RETURN FOR KEEPING THREE OUTPOSTS BELOW
RIFT RAFFAH, BECAUSE THEY WERE SO PSYCHOLOGICALLY
IMPORTANT IN VIEW THAT ISRAEL HAD BEEN ATTACKED
THREE TIMES THROUGH THERE."

2. ON BASIS OF POPE'S MEETINGS WITH SADAT AND DAYAN
(JANUARY 12 - ROME 0976), VATICAN BELIEVES THAT GREATEST DIFFICULTIES TO NEGOTIATIONS' SUCCESS ARE FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM (WHICH IS ALSO ALWAYS LINKED TO THE LEBANON PROBLEM), AND TO THE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS. THE VATICAN RECOGNIZES AND UNDERSTANDS ISRAEL'S PREOCCUPATION ABOUT CREATING AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK-- IT WOULD, ACCORDING TO CASAROLI, "ALWAYS BE LIKE A TICKING BOMB READY TO EXPLODE." ON THE OTHER HAND, VATICAN BELIEVES THAT THE ARAB STATES WILL NOT ACCEPT A MERE AUTONOMOUS PALESTINIAN ENTITY UNDER ISRAEL'S CONTROL. NEVERTHELESS, THE VATICAN BELIEVES THAT "SOLUTIONS ARE POSSIBLE WHEN PROTAGONISTS DEEM THEM NECESSARY" AND THE SEARCH FOR SATISFACTORY NEGOTIATING FORMULAS SHOULD BE CONTINUED, KEEPING IN MIND THE GOI'S CONCERN FOR SECURITY AND ARAB INSISTENCE ON PALESTINIAN SIGHTS.

3. CASAROLI COMMENDED U.S. ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS,
SAYING THAT SADAT HAD EXPRESSED SPECIAL TRUST THAT ASSISTANT
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SECRETARY ATHERTON'S FORTHCOMING "SHUTTLE" EFFORTS WILL ASSIST IN REACHING A REAL DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WITH REALISTIC FORMULAS FOR NEGOTIATING A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. CASAROLI ADDED THAT THE U.S. ROLE WAS VERY IMPORTANT AND THAT HE CONSIDERED RECENT U.S. STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AS DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN SADAT BOTH EXTERNALLY VIS-A-VIS THE OTHER ARAB STATES AND INTERNALLY, ESPECIALLY VIS-A-VIS THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY WHOSE LOYALTY TO SADAT WAS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN.

4. ON THE JERUSALEM QUESTION, CASAROLI DID NOT INDICATE WHETHER THE TALKS WITH SADAT WENT BEYOND THE RESTATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE'S POSITION (E.G. "SPECIAL STATUTE UNDER INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES" FOR JERUSALEM AND THE HOLY PLACES) OR SADAT'S REQUEST THAT THE VATICAN CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN SEARCHING FOR A JERUSALEM SOLUTION. (NOTE: CASAROLI SAID THAT SINCE SECRETARY VANCE HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST IN RECEIVING A DETAILED OUTLINE OF THE VATICAN VIEW ON JERUSALEM, HE WOULD PROVIDE US WITH A DOCUMENT ON THE SUBJECT WHICH WAS CURRENTLY IN PREPARATION.)GARDNER

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